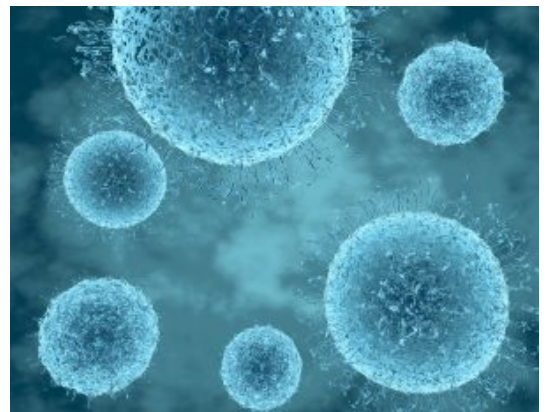


DPH Reports Six Additional Flu-Related Deaths; 995 Flu Cases Recorded in One Week

DOVER – The number of laboratory-confirmed flu cases in Delaware continues to surge and one-week totals have now surpassed the highest single-week totals in Delaware reporting history, that dates back to 2008 – 2009. The Division of Public Health (DPH) reports that there were 995 lab-confirmed flu cases recorded between January 28 and February 3, 2018. The highest single-week total previously recorded was 671 cases in 2009-2010. The most recent weekly number brings the total flu cases to 2,966 for the 2017-2018 season.

Of the six individuals who recently passed away, five were from New Castle County and one was from Sussex County. The individuals ranged from age 60 to 93 years old, and all had underlying health conditions. Nationally, there have been 4,486 flu-related deaths in the U.S., 63 of them children.



“It is so important that Delawareans act now to protect themselves and their loved ones from the flu,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Given the ongoing severity of the flu season, I cannot stress strongly enough that everyone practice additional preventive measures in addition to getting the flu vaccine.” Dr. Rattay said it is likely there will be elevated flu activity for many weeks to come.

Each of us has a critical role to play in preventing the spread of flu to others in your house, workplace and the community.

- If you are sick, do not go to school or work until you are fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Wash your hands frequently – and wipe down frequently touched surfaces with soap and water or disinfecting products.
- Cough or sneeze into tissues or into your inner elbow, if tissues are not available.



The flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu illness, serious flu complications, and the spread of the flu in the community by offering greater protection to the overall population. While some individual medical providers are

reporting a shortage of the flu vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates there is enough available and those who need a shot may need to be persistent and call a few more places to find it. Residents are urged to first contact their primary care provider for a shot, or to visit <https://vaccinefinder.org>. Children ages 9 and older can get their flu shot at local pharmacies. Additionally, Delawareans can visit flu.delaware.gov/ or call DPH at 1-800-282-8672 for a list of Public Health Clinics within State Service Centers that are providing the vaccine.

Individuals who develop influenza-like-illness symptoms are encouraged to contact their primary care provider (PCP) for treatment recommendations, or visit a walk-in care center if you do not have a PCP, instead of going to the emergency room. People who are extremely ill with symptoms such as trouble breathing, bluish skin color, fever with a rash, dizziness or severe or persistent vomiting should seek out immediate medical help. Your primary care provider may decide to provide antiviral medications to help speed up recovery and prevent

serious complications without an in-office visit. DPH asks medical providers to begin antiviral treatment for all hospitalized patients and all high-risk patients with suspected influenza

Influenza-like illness continues to increase in Delaware and across the nation. Activity is the highest seen in the last five flu seasons. Additionally, the number of flu-related hospitalizations nationwide is the highest in a decade. In Delaware, the number of hospitalizations as of Feb. 3, 2013, is 513, more than double the 199 at this time last year. To date, persons age 65 and older comprise 62.6 percent of the hospitalizations. This mirrors the national trend and the CDC is recommending the pneumonia vaccine for those 65 and older as a result.

While flu-related hospitalizations are disproportionately impacting older Delawareans, infants and children have been most heavily affected by the flu in general. Infants and children ages birth to 4 years old account for 461 of the season's cases. Combined with children ages 5 to 9 years (445 cases), they make up more than one-quarter of this season's flu cases. Children of elementary and middle school ages (5 to 13 years) account for 581 of the season's cases. Additionally, 167 cases of the flu were confirmed in high school-aged children (ages 14 – 19).

Flu is difficult to predict. It's not possible to say in advance precisely when the 2017-2018 flu season will peak or end, or how severe it will be. For more information about flu surveillance in Delaware, read the weekly flu report at dhss.delaware.gov/dph/epi/influenzawkly.html.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's

spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.